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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RITTER (Panama)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 88: NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ACHIEVING FAR-REACHING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES FOR THE PURPOSE OF SOCIAL PROGRESS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 89: QUESTION OF AGING: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 90: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING YOUTH: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 93: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 94: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 141: INTERREGIONAL CONSULTATION ON DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 88: NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ACHIEVING FAR-REACHING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES FOR THE PURPOSE OF SOCIAL PROGRESS (continued) (A/42/56-E/1987/7, A/42/57-E/1987/8; A/42/3, A/42/411; A/C.3/42/L.3)

AGENDA ITEM 89: QUESTION OF AGING: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/3, A/42/567; A/C.3/42/L.4)

AGENDA ITEM 90: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING YOUTH: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/3, A/42/595)

AGENDA ITEM 93: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/3; A/42/551, A/42/561)

AGENDA ITEM 94: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued) (A/42/3, A/42/453)

AGENDA ITEM 141: INTERREGIONAL CONSULTATION ON DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES (continued) (A/C.3/42/5)

1. Mrs. GARUBA (Nigeria) said that Nigeria had instituted a national youth policy covering such fields as education, employment and recreational facilities as part of its efforts in the context of International Youth Year. At the national, state and local levels youth organizations had been established and various youth schemes had been introduced, including travel and exchange programmes within Nigeria. Friendship between young people in Nigeria and their counterparts in other countries was fostered at various forums and in sports events; Nigeria was committed to the promotion of sports as a vital link in achieving a better world.

2. Despite the extended family system with its built-in social security, there had been an awareness in Nigeria of the needs of the disabled even before the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had been launched. The assistance of community and government agencies was always mobilized when the family and immediate community were unable to help the disabled. Non-governmental organizations, the private sector and professional organizations promoted public awareness about the needs of the disabled and generated contributions for their treatment and rehabilitation. Prevention was the primary thrust of government efforts, including safety in the workplace, pre-natal care and extended programmes of immunization.

3. In Nigeria, the elderly stayed within the extended family until they died; it had not been found necessary to build any old people's homes. It was believed that care for the elderly was compensated by what they passed down as a heritage to posterity.

(Mrs. Garuba, Nigeria)

4. Nigeria supported the efforts of the international community to combat crime; it was concentrating its efforts on the dissemination of information about the evils of crime. Legal and punitive measures were insufficient to solve the problem; moral instruction must be provided by teachers and parents, and publicity campaigns were needed to encourage young people to desist from crime and related evils such as drug abuse.

5. The role of co-operatives in Nigeria varied widely, but they all participated actively in enhancing the social and economic status of their members. Co-operatives helped raise the quality of Nigerian agricultural produce on the world market; the commodity trade within and among states was flourishing, and attention was being paid to food staples. Handicrafts co-operatives were active in rural and urban areas and provided an important source of income. In mid-1986, loans had been granted to members of co-operatives to build houses, engage in the distribution and retail trade and establish co-operative banks and supermarkets. Young people were encouraged to participate in school co-operatives, and the elderly also participated in co-operatives on a limited scale. The disabled were actively involved in crafts co-operatives, although efforts needed to be made to distribute crafts beyond the local level.

6. Nigeria had experienced rapid change following the discovery of oil reserves, which had provided the capital to develop the industrial infrastructure and telecommunications and to plan for the future. The exodus of thousands of farmers to the cities had eroded the established system of life and work and led to a sharp decline in agricultural output; the current administration had developed new policies for economic stability and made food self-sufficiency a priority. Her Government would continue its efforts to promote social progress.

7. Mr. KIM (Observer, Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the exchange of national experiences was essential for social and economic progress and for solving national problems. His country had been transformed from a backward country under foreign colonial domination into a socialist industrial State with a self-supporting modern economy and an advanced agricultural sector. In the 40 years following liberation, industrial production had increased at an average annual rate of 16.7 per cent. In 1986, the total value of industrial output had been 474 times greater than in 1946, the year following liberation.

8. His country's educational system had been established in a short space of time, universal compulsory education having been introduced in stages between 1956 and 1975. By 1985, 4,923,000 students, or a quarter of the country's population, had been attending educational institutions free of charge, and technicians and research workers had numbered a further 1,310,000. A system had also been set up to enable working people to study part-time.

9. Universal free medical care had been provided by law since 1953, the main emphasis in the public health service being on preventive medicine. In 1983, average life expectancy had reached 74.3 years, 36.3 years more than before liberation.

(Mr. Kim, Observer, Democratic
People's Republic of Korea)

10. The agricultural tax in kind had been abolished between 1964 and 1966 and the entire taxation system in 1974, making the Democratic People's Republic of Korea the first tax-free country in the world.

11. The Korean people also enjoyed enormous social and cultural benefits, including paid holidays, recreation and convalescence; free housing and child care for working people; care for the disabled and aged; and accommodation for old people without support.

12. Mrs. SYLLA-LINGAYA (Madagascar), referring to the question of aging, said that Madagascar had taken part in an international meeting on gerontology organized in 1986 in connection with the first international French-speaking seminar on gerontology in the Indian Ocean. It had participated in a survey conducted among adolescents on neighbouring islands of the Indian Ocean on the image of old people and the place of the elderly in society, and had proposed the establishment of a gerontology society of the Indian Ocean so as to increase exchanges of information and experience among countries of the region.

13. Traditionally, within Malagasy families the elderly held a special place and presided over family and community events, thereby ensuring respect for ancestral customs and traditions. The seven old people's homes operating in Madagascar, which were managed by non-governmental religious organizations or municipalities, were little used. Since the traditional system of support for the elderly was being somewhat eroded by the exodus of young people from rural areas and the trend towards the nuclear family in urban areas, however, her Government planned to make a census of elderly persons with no family support in order to reconsider the possibility of institutional care. A federation of non-governmental organizations was to be established to co-ordinate social welfare and advancement activities in the light of the real needs of the community, and a study on aging was currently being conducted. Since they believed that the elderly could participate effectively in the education of young people, the Malagasy authorities planned to build intergenerational centres along the lines of the three UNESCO pilot projects referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (A/42/567, para. 34).

14. The research projects on living arrangements for the aging and their participation in development undertaken by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should be activated and the results used to formulate measures to ensure the well-being of the aged and devise policies and programmes to ensure the participation of the elderly in development. Society must mobilize the contribution that could be made by the elderly at the intellectual and cultural levels so as to increase their participation in the national development effort.

15. The International Plan of Action on Aging offered guidelines and general principles, on the understanding that it was up to each country to formulate and implement a policy on aging in the light of its own value systems and specific national needs and objectives. In Madagascar, unfortunately as in many developing countries, the efforts undertaken to implement an aging policy had been undermined by the economic crisis.

(Mrs. Sylla-Lingaya, Madagascar)

16. Her delegation hoped that, with the effective support and contribution of international organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and voluntary organizations, the impetus given by the General Assembly to the question of aging would be maintained and strengthened.

17. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that, since the launching of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, national committees had been set up in many countries, including Morocco. A Moroccan royal sports federation for the disabled, and special study and vocational training programmes, had also been established. The Global Meeting of Experts had shown that much remained to be done and that fresh impetus must be given to the Decade. Although the implementation of the World Programme of Action depended primarily on individual States, it was to be hoped that ample funds would be made available to disadvantaged countries to enable them to take advantage of the data and experience accumulated by others. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna had opted for a wise, if difficult, solution in order to preserve social programmes in a difficult financial situation; Sweden's example was encouraging in that respect. The situation in many parts of the world was grim: it had recently been established that nearly 20 million people, mostly women and children, had been killed during 150 conflicts in developing countries since the Second World War, and many more had become disabled.

18. Young people were the greatest asset of any country; they must be properly integrated in the economic and social development process. International Youth Year had prompted Governments to consider the problems of a segment of society which had not always been given sufficient attention, and young people themselves had been encouraged to unite in identifying their problems and the strategies to be adopted, although those strategies must be tailored to different situations. In developing countries, young people must set priorities such as access to health, education, work and decent housing. That did not mean, however, that they were not concerned about broader world problems, including the problem of young people being sent into the battlefield in violation of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. Participation, development and peace were of crucial importance for young people, particularly in countries where Governments were not able to offer all the necessary solutions.

19. In Morocco, development strategy took increasing account of education, employment and personal development, and a central place was accorded to young people in that process. Morocco supported all follow-up activities to the Year which could enhance the responsibility and role of young people within their societies and countries. At the same time, the sacred values of the family must be promoted and consolidated: the disastrous effects for young people of the decline in moral values, the break-up of the family, excessive individualism, the cult of materialism, and non-respect for the elderly had been somewhat neglected, and had led to an abdication of family responsibilities, juvenile rebellion, and delinquency, drug abuse and a further decline in moral values with all the all too familiar consequences.

(Mrs. Warzazi, Morocco)

20. The Moroccan co-operative movement was expanding yearly and covered many fields. Morocco was active in international co-operative bodies, and many agreements had been concluded with co-operative organizations of other countries. Moroccan co-operatives generated employment, strengthened Morocco's productive potential and promoted the Government's economic development plans. Her delegation shared the view that the autonomy and spirit of initiative of co-operatives must be ensured; at the same time, public authorities should provide co-operatives with financial and other assistance in becoming operational. Co-operatives and pre-co-operative bodies in rural areas should receive special support both from public authorities and from national and international organizations. Savings and credit co-operatives also had a vital role to play in developing countries. At a time of rapid population growth and widespread poverty, it was essential to encourage the mobilization of human resources through international solidarity. Assistance provided by certain developed countries could help strengthen the capacity of co-operatives in developing countries and enhance their contribution to the economic and social development of their societies.

21. Miss ARGUILLES (Philippines) said that her delegation was pleased that, since the Secretary-General had designated the Vienna Office as a focal point within the United Nations for social policy and social development, it had been imbued with a new sense of purpose. Realization of the United Nations objectives of social progress and better living conditions with greater freedom for all peoples was the collective responsibility of all Member States. Her delegation believed that the foundation for a common social agenda for the future was contained in the various strategies and instruments for action to improve the situation of several vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including the aging, youth and the disabled.

22. The International Plan of Action on Aging was aimed at providing economic and social security to older persons, as well as opportunities to contribute to national development. The International Youth Year continued to inspire Member States to think of ways and means to channel the energies, enthusiasm and creative abilities of the young towards the task of nation-building. The guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up provided a conceptual framework for a long-term strategy in the field of youth. The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons remained a valuable guide for those seeking to improve the economic, social and physical conditions of disabled persons. Her delegation also endorsed the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future, adopted at the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes held at Vienna in September 1987.

23. The challenge the Committee faced was how to effectively translate agreed international social policies into practical measures. Financial constraints at the international level must not be used as a pretext for inaction, but as an opportunity to set priorities. Ultimately, it was the responsibility of national Governments to implement the measures recommended by the various international plans of action.

(Miss Arguilles, Philippines)

24. Recent domestic developments in the Philippines underscored her Government's continuing concern for the welfare of youth, the aging and the disabled. That concern was reflected in specific provisions of the recently ratified Philippine Constitution, which contained policies to provide adequate social services and to promote full employment, a rising standard of living and an improved quality of life for all. Additionally, youth, the aging and the disabled were given sectoral representation in the Philippine Congress.
25. Turning to the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the resolutions on youth, aging and the disabled, her delegation was gratified that follow-up activities for the International Youth Year had been sustained on all levels. In the Philippines, a national consultation with youth held in October 1986 had provided an opportunity for young people to dialogue with the country's policy-makers and had encouraged them to become involved in public and civic affairs. In accordance with her Government's policy of promoting and protecting physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being, one of the emphases of its medium-term development plan for the period 1987-1992 was intensification of values education for Philippine citizens, especially youth.
26. In response to the International Plan of Action on Aging, the Philippine Government had conducted a series of consultations with the aging, which had resulted in the creation of the National Federation of Senior Citizens Associations of the Philippines in 1985. The leaders of the National Federation identified the problems and needs of the elderly and conveyed them to the appropriate government agencies. The aging were also involved in a variety of volunteer activities through a government-supervised programme. Care for the aging was traditionally the responsibility and concern of the family in the Philippines and institutional care was therefore secondary.
27. Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in the Philippines had been guided by a five-year plan for disability prevention and rehabilitation covering the period 1983-1987. The current discussions in the Committee would provide additional input for her country's plan for the next five years. Her delegation was encouraged by the response to the monitoring questionnaire on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and welcomed the recommendations of the Global Meeting of Experts held at Stockholm in August 1987. Those recommendations would help revitalize observance of the Decade and enhance concerted efforts to improve the living conditions of disabled persons. The Philippines paid tribute to the non-governmental organizations of disabled persons and those representing them for their tireless efforts and dedicated support in implementing the World Programme of Action. Her delegation also expressed appreciation to the Governments of Italy and Sweden for their generous contributions to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.
28. Mr. NØTTAASEN (Norway) said that his role as Norwegian youth representative was to give the perspective of young people on the issues under consideration, as well as to inform youth and youth organizations in Norway about the results

(Mr. Nøttaasen, Norway)

emanating from the General Assembly and the important part that the United Nations system played in world society.

29. Young people should be given an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in political activities at the international level. However, care should be taken to avoid establishing structures and bodies for youth that would only duplicate the work undertaken currently in United Nations bodies. Separate international conferences for youth could be useful, but they were not an alternative for participation in the already-established international political structure. He believed that other United Nations bodies besides the General Assembly could benefit from having youth representatives present at their meetings.

30. The theme of participation had been particularly stressed by Norwegian youth during the International Youth Year, which had engaged youth more actively in a broad range of political questions. It was still too early to say whether the International Youth Year had had a lasting impact on improving the living conditions of youth, increasing their participation and influence and giving them more responsibility, but it was a source of satisfaction that the situation had been given more attention. The International Youth Year had not only been of benefit to youth but had also benefited the United Nations, in the sense that the Organization had gained more support from youth. The guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth would be a useful instrument in continuing the work begun during the International Youth Year.

31. The strong interest of youth in certain policy areas such as education, employment, health, housing and youth culture was self-evident, because those issues affected youth directly. Experience had also shown that youth were interested in such questions as world peace, the establishment of a new international economic order and the protection of the environment. In Norway, as in other countries, youth had long been deeply involved in all kinds of environmental questions. His delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's statement made prior to the presentation of the report of the World Commission on Environmental Development, in which he had drawn attention to the opportunity of involving youth in the debate and follow-up of the Commission's report. Since the major part of the population of the third world was young, youth could not be overlooked if there was to be proper follow-up to the report. Young people were less bound by traditional, segmented perspectives on global affairs than adults, and could play a major part in raising awareness of the need for a comprehensive, integrated approach to meeting environmental and developmental challenges, as the World Commission had recommended.

32. His delegation endorsed the views expressed by the youth representatives from the Netherlands and Denmark on questions such as youth exchanges, housing and employment. Disabled youth were in a particularly disadvantaged position, but much could be done to alleviate their special problems. It should be recognized that full integration of those who were disabled from childhood would lead to a better society for all, both socially and physically. Special efforts should be made to secure the participation of young people in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

33. Mr. MAPALALA (Swaziland), referring to item 90, said that his country recognized the importance of youth and the valuable contribution it could make to a developing country like Swaziland. His country had embarked on national youth projects aimed at promoting integration and solidarity among youth in order to create a generation which would be loyal, patriotic and disciplined. Efforts were under way to provide technical training for youth in various fields. Youth clubs and committees had also been organized at the national level. Despite meagre resources, his Government had given priority to such activities for the advancement of youth. Youth were an important factor in shaping the future of mankind and could prove a valuable asset for the furtherance of world peace, freedom and harmony.

34. Youth in Swaziland were vulnerable to the influence of unhealthy social aspects of modernization, such as drug abuse. However, both the Government and non-governmental organizations were endeavouring to implement measures to remedy that problem.

35. His delegation was profoundly grateful to the United Nations for promoting the universal participation of youth in national development and international peace and co-operation. The International Youth Year had provided an opportunity for developing countries to formulate their own youth programmes and policies in order to bring about a systematic and greater involvement of youth in nation-building.

36. Mr. KHYBERT (Afghanistan), referring to agenda items 88 and 90, said that Afghanistan's social policy was based on social justice. Before the April 1978 revolution, the main features of Afghan society had been poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, backwardness, inadequate health care, administrative corruption and an economy controlled by a few. People had also lacked rudimentary democratic rights and freedoms.

37. Following the revolution, economic and social changes had been introduced to improve the population's material and cultural life, and to expand the social basis of the revolution and people's participation in political, economic and social matters. A social and economic development plan had been approved for the period 1986-1991 which involved the expansion of social services through increased spending. Education and medical care were already provided free of charge. Great importance was attached to training national personnel and the number of vocational and technical schools had been greatly increased to assist early vocational training for young people. The pension system had been improved and pensions for workers increased. Legislation on family welfare covered maternal and child care; children's allowances had been increased and working mothers were now entitled to full paid leave until their children reached the age of one year.

38. Afghanistan was a multi-ethnic country and the Government ensured broad democratic freedoms and rights, including voting rights, for all nationalities and tribes.

(Mr. Khybert, Afghanistan)

39. Young people were recognized as creative participants in Afghan society and the State looked after their all-round development and ensured them an appropriate place in society. The Government had considerably expanded the educational, social, cultural and recreational infrastructure for youth, with the help of the Democratic Youth Organization of Afghanistan, a 200,000-member non-governmental organization which had set up medical, social, literacy and production brigades and was also active in fighting drug abuse and trafficking.

40. Afghanistan's social and economic successes had been achieved at a time when an undeclared war was being waged against it and the Afghan people had to defend their homeland against outside interference and aggression. They looked forward to the peace that was essential for social and economic progress and to continuing their active participation in ensuring economic, social and cultural equality throughout the world.

41. Miss AL-TURAIHI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that at the preceding meeting (A/C.3/42/SR.20) the Iranian representative had claimed that the war with Iraq had been imposed on Iran. She would like to know by whom it had been imposed and why Iran had rejected peace initiatives. She wished to hear the Iranian representative's position on Security Council resolution 598 (1987) which Iraq had accepted and which reflected the wishes of the international community.

42. As for that representative's reference to children being disabled by chemical weapons, Iran had bombed an Iraqi school, killing more than 30 children and injuring more than 200 others. Iraq also used children under 16 in its revolutionary guard. The Iranian representative's talk about Islamic teaching had been designed to divert attention from the real issue, which was to stop the war and find a just and lasting solution. As for her reference to corruption through broadcasting and other media, Iran's anti-corruption laws had people jailed for reading books the régime did not approve of. The real corruption lay in Iran's intimidation of Arab territories and its attacks on Mecca and other places in the Arab world.

43. Mrs. MAKNOON (Iran) said that she took exception to the Iraqi representative's remarks about issues which were irrelevant to the agenda items under discussion and to which she herself had not even referred at the preceding meeting. If that representative wanted to talk about war fronts and chemical weapons or other political issues, she should raise them in the First Committee. She herself had not raised irrelevant issues: she had mentioned the use of chemical weapons only as the cause of disablement and had suggested that a committee should be set up to study the causes of disablement, one of which was war. As for the matter of young boys going to the front, which was a political topic and not a matter for the Third Committee, there were many Iraqi soldiers aged under 16 in Iran, and Iran was willing to exchange them for young Iranian soldiers being held in Iraq.

44. The Security Council and many international agencies had established who was the aggressor in the Iran-Iraq war and the Third Committee should not be discussing that question. If the Iraqi representative wanted to discuss it, it could do so in the appropriate committee.

45. Miss AL-TURAIHI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, asked why the representative of Iran kept on talking about matters that she knew came within its province of the First Committee. Was she trying to distract attention from Iran's refusal to comply with Security Council resolution 598 (1987)? She could not understand her point about the aggressor, since the Security Council had said nothing about that. She would like to quote the Iranian representative on the causes of disablement. Many people in Iran were stoned to death or disabled by the savage practices of the Iranian régime.

46. Mrs. MAKNOON (Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that if the Iraqi representative wished to raise any objections to the references in her previous statement to the causes of disablement, she would answer them gladly, but she would not deal with objections that had nothing to do with her statement.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.